

locale

lowave



INSTITUT  
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INSTITUTE OF  
CONTEMPORARY ARTS  
singapore



# THEO



APRIL

18 DO 20  
13

MAY



# LITES

-- APICHA TPONG WEERASETHAKUL --  
-- RAQS MEDIA COLLECTIVE -- URIEL ORLOW --  
-- ALEXANDER SCHELLOW -- CHARLES LIM --  
-- ROMAIN KRONENBERG & BENJAMIN GRAINDORGE --  
-- MARYLENE NEGRO -- TAN PIN PIN --  
-- DANIEL HUI -- MASAYO KAJIMURA --  
-- MASSIMILIAN & NINA BREEDER -- DEBBIE DING --

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Locale* and *Lowave* would like to offer our thanks to artists Massimilian and Nina Breeder, Debbie Ding, Benjamin Graindorge, Daniel Hui, Masayo Kajimura, Romain Kronenberg, Charles Lim, Marylène Negro, Uriel Orlow, Raqs Media Collective, Alexander Schellow, Tan Pin Pin, Apichatpong Weerasethakul and for their collaboration in *Theo.do.lites*, for without their committed support, the exhibition would not have been possible.

We would also like to thank all the following organisations and individuals for their support and everyone who have contributed to making *Theo.do.lites* possible.

The French and German Embassies in Singapore,  
Institut Français Singapour and Goethe Institut Singapur

Mr Olivier CARON, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of France  
Ms Angelika VIETS, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to  
Singapore Jean-François Danis, Jennifer Kwok, Christin Fürtwängler,  
Andreas Schikofer, Antonella Fiore.

Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore (ICAS)

Charles Merewether, Ramesh Narayanan, Joleen Loh, Jessica Anne Rahardjo,  
Hafiz Osman, Redzuan Zemmy, Sufian Samsiyar

Studio 13

Tan Bee Thiam, Sherman Ong, Chris Yeo

Art for the World, Noraishah Abu Bakar, Mike Chang, Jeremy Chua, Cain Chui,  
Adelina von Fürstenberg, Low Beng Kheng, Lim How Ngean, Objectifs,  
Sawit Prasertphan, Mickaël Robert-Gonçalves, Yvonne Senouf,  
Adeline Setiawan, John Solomon, Corinne Weber, Jason Wee.

Designed by  
studioKALEIDO



*Theo.do.lites* is an exhibition examining the project of modernity through artistic explorations of site-specific urban and rural realities in Asia and Europe, in the context of their conjoined yet deferred histories.

If studies in city cultures often exhibit a critical nostalgia for an urban formation from the earlier stages of heroic modernity, we witness today a shift, revealing a sense of loss towards the promise of a vibrant future once offered by these early prototypical modernist cities. Rather than occupying the forefront of global developments, these cities are instead fast becoming a part of history. The works from Europe turn its eyes away from urban spaces towards unoccupied landscapes, reflecting a sense of disillusionment or a quest for a new spirituality. At the same time, works from Asia convey a suspicion towards its rapid urbanization in recent years, skeptical towards an idea of modernity that was never its own.

With an emphasis on moving images without being limited to it, *Theo.do.lites* reflects on these changes and presents the work of 14 contemporary artists from both continents and will offer a new appreciation of creative documentary aesthetics.

# FOREWORD: IN TRANSITORY

KENT CHAN  
CO-CURATOR, *THEO.DO.LITES*

Without a shadow of a doubt, I am a *city* person. I am most at ease in the city; I know how to navigate within one and given time, regardless of language, I would likely be able to interact with its inhabitants.

There is probably no better way to experience the city than by foot. Through the act of walking, one's experience of the city is at its most tangible. Taking time to walk through the city centre, noticing how people's pace grow slower as you move further away from the centre. Time's effect on the people of a city is thankfully never uniform and like the mechanisms of a cinematographic camera, we crank it to the rate that suits our needs.

In any project that looks at modernity, the city and the moving images, it seems unavoidable to reflect upon the *flâneur*. As Victor Fournel describes, *flâneur* was the moving photograph of urban experience.<sup>1</sup> And with *flâneur*, we recall both Charles Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin.

Baudelaire in his essay 'The Painter of modern life' (1863) first coined the term *modernité* (modernity) and defined it as 'the transitory, the fleeting, the fortuitous, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable'<sup>2</sup>. While Walter Benjamin famously defined modernity as 'the world dominated by phantasmagorias'. What connected Baudelaire, Benjamin and their contemporaries were their views on how the modern metropolis was the nexus by which modern life came to be defined. This modernity was both a 'quality' of modern life and a new aesthetic object<sup>3</sup> that gave rise to many of the art movements at the turn of the 20th century.

One of the most significant of these developments was the advent and association between the moving image and the city. A year before Wagner published what is regarded as the first modernist architectural manifesto—his *Modern Architecture*—the Lumière Brothers produced the first ever mov-

ing images. In capturing the metropolis on film, cinema has been a complicit partner in spreading the appeals of modernity. It has long been maintained that cinema develops in parallel with the modern city. As Leo Charney and Vanessa Schwartz put it, "modern culture was 'cinematic' before the fact."<sup>4</sup>

The Paris of Baudelaire, Weimar Berlin, fin de siècle Vienna and London of Bloomsbury, each of these cities were a symbol of an earlier stage of heroic modernity, rather than our time. As I walk through these cities, each different from one another, but nonetheless more in common than the cities from the region I hail from. These are different cities from different times: the former remembered for the promise it once offered and the latter for its attempts at walking the former's path. Rather than the phantasmagorias that Benjamin spoke of, I was confronted with the sense of nostalgia, as the former become a chapter in the history of modernity.

Yet with contemporaneity's reflective stance on history, it is perhaps unsurprising that these cities remain amongst the centres of contemporary art making. The nature of the sites which we encounter art and cinema are seldom absent traces of the modern.

While Bruno Latour argues that we have never truly been modern<sup>5</sup>, I am nonetheless a product of the project of modernity, albeit a potentially false and/or failed one. So it is with *Theo.do.lites* that over a century on we again look to works of moving images that address our relationship with our lived environments. In our growing lament (which is itself historical) of the project of modernity, we see the works in *Theo.do.lites* setting these sentiments in motion in relation to the city. Be it through questioning, suggestions of different forms of temporality or the act of departure, wherever the roads and currents may take us.

We are again confronted with our constant need to move forward—our triumph and our tragedy.

1 Victor Fournel, *Ce qu'on voit dans les rues de Paris*, 1867, p. 268.

2 Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life", *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, edited and translated by Jonathan Mayne. London: Phaidon Press, p. 13.

3 David Frisby, "Analysing Modernity", *Tracing Modernity: Manifestations of the Modern in Architecture and the City*, edited by Mari Hvattum and Christian Hermansen. London ; New York : Routledge, 2004, p. 7

4 Leo Charney, Vanessa R. Schwartz, eds. *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995. p. 1

5 Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press, 1993.

# THEO.DO.LITES — A DOCUMENTARY SPACE/TIME ADVENTURE IN MODERN TIMES

SILKE SCHMICKL  
CO-CURATOR, *THEO.DO.LITES*

*Theo.do.lites* was born when two contemporary visions came together. While discussing with co-curator Kent Chan the diverse trends in video art that we observed around us, we compared the common tendencies such as the development of creative documentary productions, innovative use of the relatively new and affordable high definition video technology and the experimentations in new forms of storytelling integrating either different artistic mediums or multiple screening options. A medium of our times, the moving image is undoubtedly one of the most striking and rapidly changing artistic genres, influenced by the various spheres of cinema, visual arts and commercial productions.

When analyzing these topics we rapidly turned our attention to the filmed subject matters and noticed a significant discrepancy in the examined works from Asia and Europe. While the videos from Asia were primarily characterized by urban themes—a consequence brought on by the sudden phenomena of accelerated urbanization in many Asian cities now referred to as megacities—the European works turned their gaze away from inhabited territories in order to focus on empty, natural landscapes. Others combined these two topographies by illustrating subtle tangencies and possible forms of communication between the two that connected these bodies of works by the 14 artists together.

It is the investigative nature perceptible in these artworks that the title, *Theo.do.lites* was derived. A

theodolite is an optical instrument consisting of a small mounted telescope rotatable in horizontal and vertical planes, used to measure angles in surveying, astronomy, meteorology, and navigation<sup>1</sup>. The instrument's origin and etymologic provenance is uncertain. Speculations about *theo*, the Greek denomination of God, or *thea*, the Greek description of the "act of watching", *délos* the "visible", or *odelos* describing the circumference, have not been confirmed. Nevertheless, we were interested in the optical device's ability to take measurements over a territory in order to evaluate, interpret and contrast the resulting data. Like topographers or land surveyors, the artists presented in *Theo.do.lites* use their camera or their pen to document and explore the hidden angles of landscapes in order to unveil obscure visions and impressions.

The strong desire to reflect on reality is a significant leitmotif of the exhibition—a development that is currently observed in many artistic, humanistic and scientific fields as the virtual slowly supersedes the tangible in reality. The attention paid to reality is thereby no general reflection on reality itself but the precise focus on a specific reality; grounded geography that may be the artists' natural environment or a foreign and unknown terrain. The concentration on these site-specific circumstances allows the artists to appropriate the landscape and to draw an enigmatic portrait of the chosen site.

The physical position adopted by the group of

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1 Invented it 1571 by Thomas Digges in Britain. Theodolite—basic surveying instrument of unknown origin but going back to the 16th-century English mathematician Leonard Digges; it is used to measure horizontal and vertical angles. In its modern form it consists of a telescope mounted to swivel both horizontally and vertically. Leveling is accomplished with the aid of a spirit level; crosshairs in the telescope permit accurate alignment with the object sighted. After the telescope is adjusted precisely, the two accompanying scales, vertical and horizontal, are read. in: *Encyclopedia Britannica Online* 2008.

artist plays a crucial role in the development of their perception. It may be static as in Masayo Kajimura's *traveling time series: Ahrenshoop #01* or Marylène Negro's *Moss*, fluctuating like in Raqs Media Collective's *Sleepwalkers' Caravan*, or in motion as in Api-chatpong Weerasethakul's *Mobile Man* or Massimilian and Nina Breeder's *The Car Crashes*. The artists always seem to be inside the image. In contrast to other documentary approaches, their visions reach us from the essence of the place itself, delivering a physical, sensorial and almost tangible experience of it. This particularity reminds us of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* where he states that the body with whom we see, is a fundamental denominator that needs to be taken into consideration for every act of perception<sup>2</sup>.

According to Merleau-Ponty, the object and the body are made of the same material and the vision somehow constructs itself within this material. Consequently the contemplation of an image, or in our case a filmic object, is no longer perceived as a detached object, a double of something, but as an integrative part of us<sup>3</sup>. In Romain Kronenberg's *Eldorado*, where drawings by Benjamin Graindorge encounter real landscape images of a Spanish desert, two artistic visions make use of the most direct mediums to represent reality (the camera and the gesture of the pen) and highlight precisely the interconnectivity of these visions. Or even more explicitly in Alexander Schellow's *Nero*, where urban perceptions through conversations with residents, city planners, politicians, ecologists and archaeologists collected alongside the Nero river of Athens are stored in the artist's memory and later translated through unique, realistic and almost photographic drawings.

The extremely sensitive approach, based on subtle observations, allows then for the creation of a cartographic impression. Comparable to *Nero*, Charles Lim's *All The Lines Flow Out* establishes an intriguing map of Singapore through documentary images of the local "longkangs", Singapore's canal system. The mapping of the territory follows a systematic and almost logical procedure that is however disturbed by the presence of alienated figures dressed in plastic suits. They pour white material into the water as they wander in the canal valley, adding an oneiric ambience to the work.

A dreamlike dimension is also explored in Debbie Ding's *Maps Without Buildings*, a series of hand-illustrated studies of places produced during her travels through cities and the countryside in Europe. As dreams are visual, the artist used to record her dreams in the form of maps. At one point, she realised that all her dreams involved buildings because she had always lived in cities. By studying and visualising landscapes devoid of buildings,

Debbie Ding developed a new cartography and imagines that one day she will have dreams without buildings in them. Daniel Hui's *Szyzygy* undertakes another form of mapping the city-state through a video installation that consists of interwoven portraits of his close entourage. The work investigates the urban landscape in which the artist grew up in to draw a social portrait of Singapore seen through the prisms of family and class. The stories of these people find an echo in the commemoration of accident sites presented in Tan Pin Pin's documentary *The Impossibility of Knowing*. Several sequences of accident sites are introduced by an off-screen male voice that recounts how the catastrophes happened. The objective cinematography and steady voice contrast with the tragic histories embedded within the mise-en-scène.

Another historically monumental site exists as the axis of Uriel Orlow's *Remnants of the Future*. The artist revisits a ghost city in Northern Armenia near the Georgian and Turkish borders, where a factory that once produced over 50% of the Soviet Union's textiles was destroyed in an earthquake in 1988. Under the form of beautiful tableau-like images, the film reflects on the particularity of this place, the ruins of what was once a project for the future. The vanities of the people's activities clash with the spectacle of architectural grandeur exuded by the now decayed buildings in the background, as well as the amalgam of documentary and fictional elements, renders the video into an almost science fictional domain.

As in *Remnants of the Future* or *The Impossibility of Knowing*, where the storytelling is inspired either by historical or more recent events, a certain number of other works play with the interrelationship of the past and the present. The portrayal of the landscape goes thereby hand in hand with the development of a specific time structure and the creation of a singular time-space environment. In Raqs Media Collective's *Sleepwalker's Caravan* a mobile camera captures a floating couple of the mythic male and female figures of a Yaksha and a Yakshi. In various Indic traditions, they represent a class of generally benevolent nature spirits who are the custodians of treasures that are hidden in the earth and keepers of riddles. Yakshas were often given homage as tutelary deities of a city, district, or lake<sup>4</sup>. In Raqs Media Collective's work, these two figures of the past are put into relation with the present against the backdrop of a cityscape. Continuously capturing their gaze, the camera floats on the river along with the sculptures, but with their relationship permanently in flux, as if the dialogue between past and present, myths and modern developments, needed to be constantly reconsidered. The intense gaze of

2 "Visible et mobile, mon corps est au nombre des choses, il est l'une d'elles, il est pris dans le tissu du monde et sa cohésion est celle d'une chose. Mais, puisqu'il voit et se meut, il tient les choses en cercle autour de soi. [...] La vision est prise ou se fait du milieu des choses, là où un visible se met à voir, devient visible pour soi et par la vision de toutes les choses, là où persiste comme l'eau mère dans le cristal, l'indivision du sentant et du senti.", in: Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "L'oeil et l'esprit", in: *L'Art de France*, 1961, p. 188-189; Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, Paris, 1945, p. 381-383.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 190.

4 Cf. *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, 2008.

these static sculptures, which are unorthodoxly animated through their floating and sleepwalking positions, raises the questions whether they are protecting or abandoning the city's welfare, and whether they are leaving or entering the city. Like a theodolite they scrutinize the site and gather a visual documentation of reality, visions and dreams.

A contemplative space-time exposure is likewise visible in *traveling time series: Ahrenshoop #01* where Masayo Kajimura filmed the sky and the Baltic Sea over a span of 30 days. The radical self-imposed process with its invariable frame portrays in its continuity a rare beauty that lies in the systematic and subtle observations of reality. From the time that passes, the infinitely repetitive undulation of night and day, low and high tide becomes a poetic manifestation of colour, light and movement. The concentration on a precise motive combined with an unusual temporality transforms the common into the uncommon and induces thereby a new territory with a significant mental and spiritual plane.

Marylène Negro's *Moss* joins this exploration of a new transcendent experience. Based on a handful of photographs of the Moss Garden at the Saihō-ji temple near Kyoto, the artist constructed a dense portrait of this natural landscape. The extreme reduction of the visual material counteracts with the imposed duration through the animation process that is stretched to the maximum. Marylène Negro's film goes where the cinema cannot and explores the limits of cinematographic narration and techniques. By interpenetrating, overlaying and burying themselves in a strange dark entanglement, the images generate new images, secret fantasies that recall the spirit of the place encountered by the artist in 2009. The slow evolution of the images allows the spectator to penetrate the garden and to undergo a sensorial experience where the vision constructs itself within this pictorial and sonorous material.

With Romain Kronenberg and Benjamin Graindorge's *Eldorado* the spectator is gravitated to another space, a remote desert—a territory that alludes to a hybrid of mental images and myths. The arid and timeless landscape is used as a vanishing point, as a symbol of renewal and death. Each of the two creators imagined, in their own disciplines, possible forms of evasion that could approach this perspective line. The act of creation and the process that laid between the intuition of a form and its concretization becomes accordingly the central theme of a film. The creator's act is visualized through hands that patiently construct a model made of wood and piercing needles that similarly evokes the hostility experienced in the desert, signifying the endurance required to accomplish his task. The drawings of Benjamin Graindorge slowly overlay the video images of Romain Kronenberg to suggest the reopening of this physical and mental space. The slow tempo that is established in the film is an essential element in the process of observation and

reflection that culminates in a momentous distortion as the desert turns blue, whilst the disrupted images of the handheld camera captures the appearance of a wanderer who now concretely penetrates the rigorous territory to conquer his Eldorado.

Massimilian and Nina Breeder work on a similar survey of the limits of the penetrability of spaces with their series *The Car Crashes*. Over the last few years, the Italian artist duo has realized several films in the American landscape that encapsulated the terrain in long takes and isolated dioramas. Traveling as a pair, where each one is actor and cameraman at the same time, they journey cross-country to document primarily natural but also social phenomena that occur on their expedition. Complementing this duality is a third character—the landscape, which presents a human antagonist. Being profoundly connected and at the same time obstructed by the landscape, the couple's acts tend to transgress in an attempt to overcome this barrier and to establish a connection with nature. In *The Car Crashes* this transgression is symbolized through the figure of the car and the explorations of extinction, speed and power. Various cars of different brands enter each of the episodes visually and become a fourth character in the series. These massive machineries appear disproportionately powerful to the human being and contains traces of its violent encounters with the landscape. With *The Car Crashes*, Massimilian and Nina Breeder continue their reflection on the relationship between urbanized and natural spaces and the place of the human in-between these antithetic environments.

Apichatpong Weerasethakul's *Mobile Man* poses similar questions and captures yet another different situation of transgression. Shot within the framework of the *Stories on Human Rights*<sup>5</sup> project, the film presents two young men and the filmmaker himself on a truck that crosses the Thai landscape in an early evening ambiance. The car is not employed as an instrument of power but as a moving entity that allows intimacy. As the truck drives, the camera is moved several times explicitly, either by the hand of the director or by his actors which recalls the change of perspective in *Sleepwalker's Caravan*. On the request of one of the boys, the camera focuses on him and he starts presenting himself through gestures and poses, without dialogue. He exposes himself to the spectator both physically and emotionally and then directs the camera to the other boy. Like his counterpart, the latter enjoys being filmed too and shows off his tattoos, some words and a long and boisterous scream. This scream was intended to describe the pain he felt when he was getting his tattoos, but transforms into an expression of youth, joy and ecstasy. The memory and present merges into an intense moment of pure being. The focus on sheer emotion breaks down the barrier between the actor and the viewer and creates a transcending connection.

5 The film comprises 22 three minute shorts directed by international filmmakers to mark the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They are inspired by six themes: Culture, Development, Dignity & Justice, Environment, Gender, Participation. Amongst others films by Marina Abramović, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster & Ange Leccia...

*Mobile Man* is the only work in the exhibition that depicts such a liberated image of the human being, maybe precisely because of this detachment towards a specific space and consequently an established system. By contrast the other works are characterized by the absence of man, its isolation or alienation. However, all of the works presented in *Theo.do.lites* speak directly about the human being and its condition through critical reflections on recent developments and by imagining new scenarios. Original perspectives for the future are opened up through visual and sonorous spaces that are rooted in the development of the particular time/space environments developed above. Two major threads are perceptible: on the one hand there are those who analyze given urban realities, on the other hand those who turn their gaze towards empty and inhabited territories that are rarely their own. We may mention here that all of the artists live and work in urban environments and that the choice of their filmed subject depends on different strategies to react to the given reality. The predominant urban subject matters by the artists from Asia is very much a reaction to the rapid development of cities in Asia over the last decades. The onset of modernity in Europe at the turn of the century produced a predominantly euphoric ambiance due to its economic progress and social achievements, despite the critical voices of intellectuals and historians. In Asia too, the city still functions as a magnet, a symbol of prosperousness and abundance, yet its reception is increasingly restrained and met with suspicion. On both continents, the city is no longer a place for the *flâneur* as in Walter Benjamin's *Paris, Capital of the 19th Century* or Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin: Symphony of a Metropolis*, where the urban space was glorified as the site of unbounded possibilities and creative human energies. The euphoria of the past has since been replaced by a measured optimism. The position of men has been weakened through the concentration of worldwide capitalistic mechanisms that leave little room for the individual fulfillment despite the omnipresent promises of private pleasures and emancipation. As a reaction, the artists presented in this exhibition have emptied their images of a human presence that only occurs under the form of phantasmal, alienated appearances. To contrast with this disenchanting observation, they

present us with dreams, subtle cartographies, or interdisciplinary analyses. The human capacities to change the circumstances and the aspiration that this desire becomes a reality are illustrated by the artists' shift in perspectives that becomes effectively the central theme of the presented artworks.

The sentiment is shared by its European counterpart, where the consequences of constant economic growth of the so-called modernity experienced for over a century, is similar. The impotence of the human being in respect to the established systems have led them to turn their gaze away from the space of all powers, the city. Alternative visions are explored in new territories that are sublimated through the artists' eyes that reconnect the human to a bigger system that is nature. This sublimation of nature recalls Benjamin's studies on the aura for which the auratic experience articulates forgotten bonds between the realms of civilization and nature, between the unanimated and the animated. Benjamin describes the process of modernization as a gradual emancipation from the authority of auratic gazes. Despite the use of technologies for mechanical reproduction that, as referenced from Benjamin, are means that interrupt the mystical interplay of closeness and distance, contemplation and identification, the artists in *Theo.do.lites* seem to be concerned with recreating an auratic relationship with their surroundings and to replace the universal equality and transitoriness of things by auratic appeals to permanence and uniqueness<sup>6</sup>. The acceleration of life in the modern urban metropolis responsible for the disintegration of the aura is thus slowed down and the circular rather than chronological time reminds us of the human in nature, the natural in humanity. The state of modernity that we witness today is certainly different from the modernity described by Benjamin and his contemporaries, but the reflections on how mankind can respond to bigger social changes remain the same. The loss of a sense of reality in favour of formalistic rules that define the foundations of a new reality and a certain loss of idealism in favour of more hedonistic and more immediate values often characterize an empire in a state of decadence. It is maybe a definition of this new reality that the artists united in *Theo.do.lites* elaborate, as pioneers of changes to come.



# LINE OF FLIGHT

CHARLES MEREWETHER  
DIRECTOR, INSTITUTE OF  
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‘Being is the unique event in which all events communicate with one another.’  
(Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*)

Gathering a dispersed group of ten artists, a collaboration and an artists group, the project *Theo.do.lites* is a curatorial project that marks a point of view or a proposition about the interconnectedness of these artists, regardless of country, age and gender.<sup>1</sup> Working across France and Singapore, the project seeks to offer a “new appreciation of contemporary, creative documentary aesthetics that explore site-specific urban and rural realities on both continents.”<sup>2</sup>

In such terms this project maybe seen as a continuation of modernity stemming from the advent of cinema and great work of Walter Ruttmann and his *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (1927) alongside Dziga Vertov’s *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929). Vertov offers a reconstructed reality rather than a representational reflection, capturing a film truth<sup>3</sup> about everyday life. Neither film is constrained by script or a traditional narrative style and structure but rather allow for an open form as if the energy of the city itself shapes the events and time and space. One image opening, and then mounting and merging into another rolling across the tumult of a day, the heartbeat of its nightlife. The city through film became a site to be reanimated, in which the mechanism of industrialization seemed to be in the service of its people, of individuals.

Writing at this time, Walter Benjamin became the chronicler of this world of the city. He took inspiration from the world of Baudelaire and the flâneur he had written of in the middle of the 19th century.

Whether it was Paris, Marseille, Moscow or Berlin—all of which conjured a phantasmagoric space: full of wonder, of intoxication and spectres of desire. Benjamin found in the outmoded, or obsolete an energy, as if like dreams, they could be released. By the Eighteen Eighties, the city had become a laboratory for the social sciences such as criminology, psychiatry and anthropology, which began to make their way as the study of other cultures.

By the time of Benjamin, the city was more industrialized but it offered no less a mesmerizing world. The advent of the moving camera seemed to capture its spirit. In the Soviet Union and Germany artists across the spectrum of media made their work in the spirit of experimentation and advance of a better life. The schools and workshops like Vkhutemas in Moscow and the Bauhaus in Weimar and Dessau championed the unison of modernization and modernism. Informed by modernization, modernism was its height and there was euphoria about what the modern city could offer its residents and people through forms of mass production and distribution. Benjamin saw in this a subjectivity liberated, a subject emancipated, in short, a new collective subject.

And yet, almost one hundred years later, this elan has gone. The project of modernity has imploded. The curators of *Theo.do.lites* Kent Chan and Silke Schmicki have pointed out that their project is a ‘survey of the dislocation of sensibilities over the various spaces and temporalities reflective of the history and project of modernity.’<sup>4</sup>

Suspend for a moment all the differences between Europe and Asia. This discourse is not overdetermined or even guided by the neo-colonialist

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- 1 A theodolite is an instrument capable of measuring both horizontal and vertical planes. One of Akira Kurosawa’s last films *Dersu Uzala* (1975) tells the story of a Russian explorer who is measuring land with the aid of a theodolite in the Russian Far East. He comes into contact with an old Nanai man who is living and hunts in the region for his survival. The deer-hunter, although going blind, knows the lay of the land. He can smell and sense the presence and proximity of deer, the changes in the climate and shows how the Russian can in fact survive the bitter conditions of a bitter winter storm and onslaught of a blizzard.
  - 2 Chan and Schmicki, Exhibition Proposal Notes unpublished.
  - 3 Vlada Petric, *Constructivism in Film: ‘The Man with a Movie Camera,’ A Cinematic Analysis*. (Cambridge University Press 1987), 9.
  - 4 Chan and Schmicki, Exhibition Proposal Notes unpublished.

legacy imbricated in the diffusion of modernity across national boundaries. We are far too from the ethnographic turn in which distinct cultures were treated as other. The cinema of Michelangelo Antonioni had vanquished such a trope. David Locke, the protagonist of *The Passenger* (1975) loses his way. The desert swallows up the character: a dissolving figure, a trace that becomes image. What Antonioni showed in his later work was an objectivity that no longer implies control, guidance or centralizing narration. Rather, it begins to drift away, to be distracted. As Sam Rohdie suggests of Antonioni cinema "it begins to move, to slide away at the precise moment that you think you have it, threatening not only the subject, the narrative, but subjectivity itself with extinction, with formlessness."<sup>5</sup>

The curators of *Theo.do.lites* write of the recognition of an era that is after that of modernism. This place is where the heterogeneity of distinction meets common ground. A common ground that is already marginal to the logic of a global economy. There is recognition of the different contemporaries overlapping each other. This is not the idea of its celebration of the overcoming of differences so that we may exchange and speak together through translation, where cultures cross and mix and interplay in a carnival of multiplicity. Rather Dislocation is at the heart of this commonness. Delay is per-

petual. It is not a matter a time. There is no sense of planning that is now. This belongs to the past, a past in which the future was imagined, dreamed of.

There is now neither place nor time. If the experience of flux was characteristic of Benjamin's assessment of modernity, transition is of an essence to the now time of contemporary art.

The camera moves not out of an intoxicating restlessness. Memory lies in ruins, the center holds as heterogeneity lie in tatters in the wastelands. Overwhelmingly, much of cinema has been swallowed up by the studio system and economies of profitability. The art film has survived and yet always at the margins. It is perhaps closest to poetry as a literary form. Some of the titles of the work by these artists evoke this world: *All The Lines Flow Out*, *Maps Without Buildings*, *The Impossibility of Knowing*, *The Car Crashes*, *Remnants of the Future*. Crossing boundaries of country and time, 'stories' are revealed that are neither driven by characters, plot nor even narrative. There is no Proustian memory or the act of remembering that Benjamin imagined as the source of an unrealized future of the past. There are no endings, no destinations. There is something that echoes the legacy of existentialism in their character. Being is unhoused. Life is pared down, capturing incidents without a structuring frame. Time passes.



# MOBILE MEN

## APICHA TPONG WEERASETHAKUL

Mobile Men / Thailand / 2008 / 3'15 / video / 16:9

Two young men in a pickup truck are filming themselves. Belonging to different parts of the world, through the use of a camera they are discovering each other. In a windy atmosphere, they initially film each other with close ups on parts of their bodies, then, little by little, they shoot their full figures. As the camera lenses change, a landscape of rice fields and a cinema crew get into the frame. The camera then reshoots the road and the men, as if we were witnessing a film rehearsal. When the frame goes back to shoot one of the two main characters who has tattoos over his body, the man lifts his shirt up and tears off a wired microphone that is taped to his chest. He then pastes it on the tattoo and cries out from the top of his lungs. The microphone picks up the heavy wind noise and the camera moves to captures his face. He looks directly at the camera, smiling.

Born 1970 in Thailand. Lives and works in Changmai.

Apichatpong Weerasethakul studied architecture at Khon Kaen University and filmmaking at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. His seven feature films to date have won him worldwide acclaim and a string of major awards including the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival, for his 2010 film, *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*. Alongside his feature filmmaking, Apichatpong has produced a wealth of photographic, video and installation work for museums, galleries and biennales including those in Istanbul (2001), Busan (2004), Taipei (2005), Liverpool and Singapore (2006), as well as Australia's Asia-Pacific Triennial (2006) and dOCUMENTA (13) in Kassel, Germany (2012). His multi-platform *Primitive* project (2009) was commissioned by Haus der Kunst, Munich, FACT Liverpool and the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, and has since toured to New York's New Museum. In 2008, Apichatpong was honoured with the medal of Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Minister of Culture and Communications. In 2010, he was a finalist of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum's Hugo Boss Awards and the recipient of the inaugural Fine Prize from the 55th Carnegie International. In his native Thailand, Apichatpong has been a tireless advocate for artistic freedom and an avid supporter of younger artists and filmmakers through Kick the Machine Films, the Bangkok-based production company he founded in 1999.



# ALL THE LINES FLOW OUT

CHARLES LIM

All The Lines Flow Out / Singapore / 2011 / 21'00 / video / 3.3:1

“Longkang” is from the Malay word for drain. It is used to describe any form of man-made water passage, from small drains to big canals. Set in the “longkangs” of hypermodern Singapore, a seemingly innocent activity triggers a mysterious event, which leads to a search and eventual surrender.

Born 1973 in Singapore. Lives and works in Singapore

Charles Lim Yi Yong took part in the 1996 Olympics and in the 2007 America's Cup as a sailor. Charles graduated from Central Saint Martins with a first-class honours degree in Fine Art. After graduation, he founded a net collective art group called tsunamii.net, which exhibited in Documenta11. Combining his knowledge of the sea and love for making images, he embarked on the *SEA STATE* series, which exhibited at Manifesta7, the Shanghai Biennale and the Singapore Biennale.

His short film, *One Day I Forgot And Used My Hands* was invited to the Rotterdam Film Festival, the Tribeca Film Festival and the Edinburgh Film Festival. His latest short film, *All The Lines Flow Out* premiered at the 68th Venice International Film Festival, Orizzonti Section and won “Special Mention Award”. It went on to win “Silver Award” at the 17th Hong Kong Independent Short Film and Video Awards (IFVA), Asian New Force and “Best Experimental Short Film” at the 43rd Nashville Film Festival. The film also won “Experimental Innovation Award” at the 9th Beijing Independent Film Festival and “Best Cinematography” at Singapore Short Film Awards 2013.

Website: [www.charleslim.org](http://www.charleslim.org)



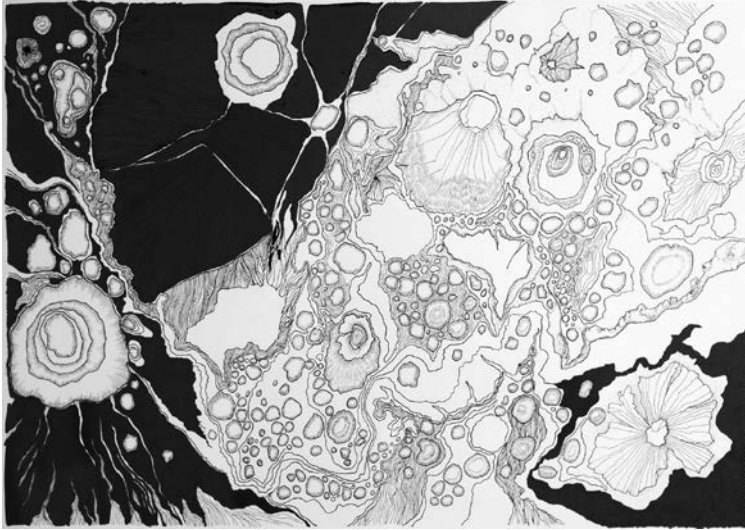
# SYZYGY

DANIEL HUI

Syzygy / Singapore / 2013 / 12' / 16mm to DVD / 4:3

Daniel Hui is a Singaporean filmmaker and writer. A graduate of the film program in California Institute of the Arts, his films have been screened at film festivals in Rotterdam, Hawaii, Manila, Seoul, Bangkok, and Vladivostok. His writings have been published in prominent cinema journals, including the Cinematheque Quarterly of the National Museum Singapore. He recently co-authored a paper that was published in a regional film conference held by the Hua Hin International Film Festival, Thailand. He is one of the founding members of 13 Little Pictures, an independent film collective whose films have garnered critical acclaim all around the world. He is currently living in Los Angeles.

Syzygy is an astronomical term for the alignment of three celestial bodies in a gravitational system. It derives its meaning from the Greek word 'συζυγία,' for "yoked together", a predecessor of our modern film montage. This work consists of three monitors placed in a single line, one behind the other. The first two monitors form a pair that shows interviews in close-up, whereas the third and furthest monitor shows the originary landscape of Singapore. The three monitors are united in sound—as the viewer puts on the headphones attached to the monitors, she will hear the same monologue over all three monitors. The work seeks to present the (lost) unity between different landscapes, people, and classes, that distance between things is sometimes a matter of parallax.



# MAPS WITHOUT BUILDINGS

DEBBIE DING

Maps Without Buildings / Singapore / 2011-13 / Ink on paper / 594 x 420 mm

*Maps Without Buildings* is a hand-illustrated study of place and natural features as they are commonly represented in topographic maps. It was produced as the artist travelled through cities and the countryside in Europe. As dreams are visual, the artist used to record her dreams in the form of maps. A friend of the artist noted that all her dream maps had buildings in them, whereupon she realised that all her dreams involved buildings because she had always lived in cities. By studying and visualising landscapes devoid of buildings, the artist imagines that one day she will have dreams without buildings in them.

Born 1984 in Singapore. Lives and works in Singapore

Debbie Ding is a Singapore-based visual artist, programmer and independent researcher. She facilitates the Singapore Psychogeographical Society, which is devoted to promoting a better understanding of the world through ludic adventures, independent research, digital documentation, and data/archival activism.

Debbie is interested in “psychogeoforensics”, which means to approach the various psychogeographical *ambiances* in a city from the domain of forensics. Through psychogeoforensics, one may view the city as the scene of the mystery, or even as the missing artifact itself. It is hoped that by creating alternative avenues of public interactions and exchanges, and building archives, people will be encouraged to construct or reconstruct their own narratives around various physical traces, histories, and archives that are often overlooked in an urban environment.

Website: [www.dbbd.sg](http://www.dbbd.sg)



# SLEEPWALKERS' CARAVAN

RAQS MEDIA COLLECTIVE

Sleepwalkers' Caravan / India / 2008 / 11'04 / single screen video / 16:9

A video features the wandering figures of a Yaksha and a Yakshi, mythic male and female guardians of treasure and keepers of riddles in different Indic traditions. The Yaksha and Yakshi sleepwalk away from the doors of a treasury. Unattended questions, ascending and descending, forgotten in the long vigil spent in the relentless shepherding of capital, lie scattered in the landscape of their nocturnal adventures. Dreams, visions, and riddles begin to gather, crowding the tail of this sleepwalking caravan. The Yaksha and the Yakshi provide a crepuscular subjectivity to a landscape, their gaze passing, leaving open the question whether the guardians of wealth are leaving the city or entering it.

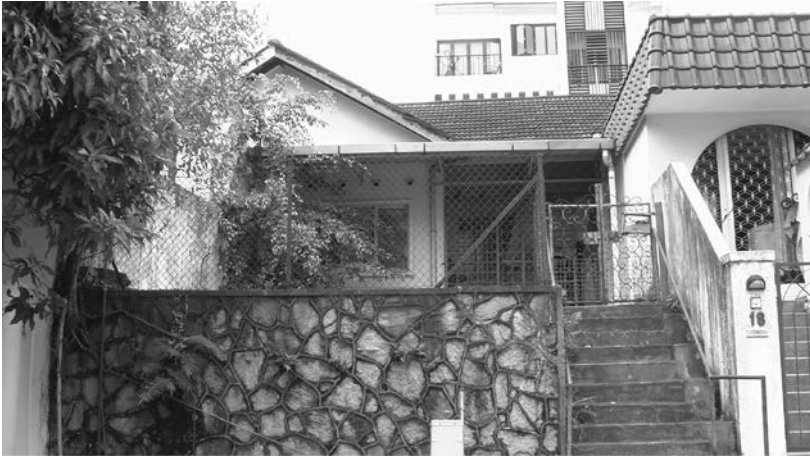
Monica Narula born 1969, Jeebesh Bagchi born 1965,  
Shuddhabrata Sengupta born 1968 in India

Founded in 1992. Based in Delhi, India

Raqs Media Collective have been variously described as artists, curators, editors and catalysts of cultural processes. Their work, which has been exhibited widely in major international spaces and events, locates them along the intersections of contemporary art, historical inquiry, philosophical speculation, research and theory; often taking the form of installations, online and offline media objects, performances and encounters. They live and work in Delhi, based at Sarai, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, an initiative they cofounded in 2000. They are members of the editorial collective of the Sarai Reader series.

Website: [www.raqsmediacollective.net](http://www.raqsmediacollective.net)





# THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF KNOWING

TAN PIN PIN

The Impossibility of Knowing / Singapore / 2011 / 11'31 / video / 16:9

*The Impossibility of Knowing* was borne out of the humble realisation that there is no way one can know everything significant about Singapore. The documentary visits and films locations where crimes or accidents have taken place, long after the events have happened to find out if these places can transcend time to engender their own significance. They cannot. These places only have meaning is so far that they have meaning in relation to individuals or communities.

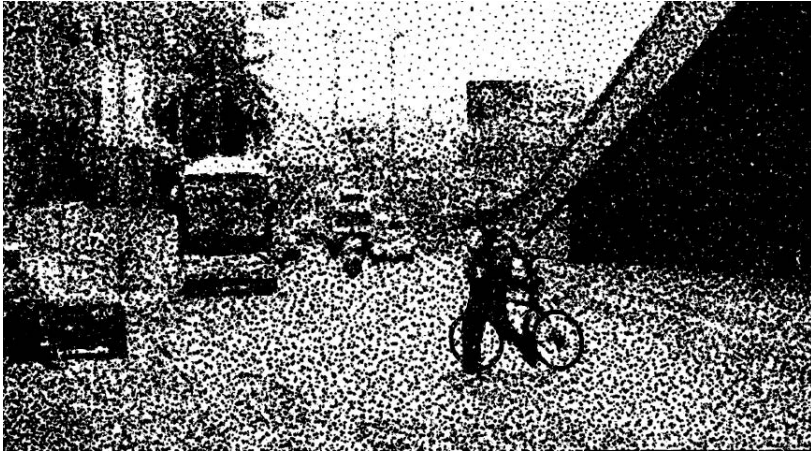
And meaning has to be teased out with research and further questioning. Moreover, one locale can bear infinite shades of meaning for different people.

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Born 1969 in Singapore. Lives and works in Singapore.

Tan Pin Pin is an award-winning Singaporean film director. She is known for her insightful and heartfelt films about Singapore and her ability to bring out poignant moments in ordinary, everyday scenes. Her films are critical and commercial successes. And they have screened in Berlin, Cinema du Reel, Pusan, Rotterdam, Nantes 3 Continents. *Singapore GaGa* was voted the Best Film 2006 by Straits Times. It was the first independent documentary to have a sold out 7 week screening. *Invisible City*, about people who obsessively document Singapore also had a sold-out theatrical release in Singapore. *Moving House*, made for Discovery Channel, a film about the exhumation of one's parents' graves won multiple awards including the Student Academy Award. All films are screened in Singapore schools. Meanwhile *9th August* about National Day Parades was commissioned by the National Museum for the History of Singapore Gallery. She has an MFA from Northwestern University, USA and an MA from Oxford University.





# NERO

## ALEXANDER SCHELLOW

NERO / Greece, Germany / 2011-13, work in progress / excerpts from the archive: drawings, animations /  
black and white / no sound / 16:9 / production: MELD (Athens/Paris), index.film (Berlin)

The construction of the Kifisias freeway begun in the 1970s and was finally completed for the Athens Olympics in 2004. The Kifissos river, which has historically served as *the* formative axis of the cities development, has since been nearly entirely covered over within the city perimeter. *NERO* reconstructs in series of drawings and animations the flow of the river through the perceptions and practices that preserve it as an urban reality. The research along the Kifissos and in conversations with residents, city planners, politicians, ecologists and archaeologists intends to reveal the concrete effects had on the way people in Athens orient and position themselves, as well as the polemics, projections and social realities ignited by the “Kifissos issue”.

Born 1974 in Germany. Lives and works in Berlin

Since 1999, Alexander Schellow has had an ongoing practice with the process of visual reconstruction from memory in drawing series, animations, installations, lectures, performances and book publications. He has collaborated with scientists and artists in various fields and presented at international exhibitions, screenings, site-specific projects and research in the frame of museums, galleries, performance-spaces, biennials and festivals, including T.I.C.A.B.—Tirana International Contemporary Art Biennial (Albania), 1st Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art, Centre Georges Pompidou (Paris), Steirischer Herbst Graz, Tanzquartier Wien, Museion (Bolzano), KAAI Brussels, Sophiensæle Berlin, HAU Berlin, Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, de Appel arts centre (Amsterdam), 11ème Biennale de Lyon, Le Fresnoy (Lille), Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, La Friche Marseille, Institute of Contemporary Arts (Singapore), Sharjah Biennale, FID Marseille, NGBK Berlin. He has a long-term cooperation with Galerie Ute Parduhn (Düsseldorf), FILMS DE FORCE MAJEURE (Marseille) and MELD (New York, Paris, Athens). In 2010, he founded index.film. Since 2007, he has had teaching positions at universities and postgraduate institutions including in Paris, London, Brussels and Constance and has been awarded grants and residencies including Akademie Schloss Solitude, Max Pechstein Award, Senior Fellowship at the Zukunftskolleg of University Konstanz, BKM (Bundeskulturministerium), CNC, Medienboard Berlin Brandenburg, Mecènes du Sud and residencies a.o. at Le Grim/Montevideo Marseilles.

Website: [en.alexanderschellow.de](http://en.alexanderschellow.de) and [www.indexfilm.de](http://www.indexfilm.de)



# MOSS

## MARYLENE NEGRO

Moss / France / 2009 / 26'20 / video / 16:9 / colour

*Moss* follows a recurring trend in many of Marylène Negro's films, which are constructed entirely from photographic images. The photographs were taken in the garden of foams in Kyoto, where the solitary artist ventured and encountered the spirit of the place. It is the sum of these pictures in front of her computer that the film is realized. They interpenetrate, overlaying and burying themselves in a strange dark entanglement, impenetrable to the point of creating secret images and fantasies that take the form of an abstract painting.

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Born 1957 in France. Lives and works in Paris, France

Marylène Negro's films are never remakes. They go there, where the cinema cannot. There, where the cinema got tired to go or does not adventure anymore. Their gazes are turned to the interior, forces them to attack themselves, to pummel their material through computer software, to push the irrationality furthest away, emotion glows and the slowness beyond the possible.

Website: [www.marylène-negro.net](http://www.marylène-negro.net)



# TRAVELING TIME SERIES: AHRENSHOOP #01

MASAYO KAJIMURA

traveling time series: Ahrenshoop #01 / Masayo Kajimura /

Japan-Germany / 13'07 / video installation / 5:4

*traveling time series: Ahrenshoop #01* shows a precisely composed view recorded in Ahrenshoop, a small town on a narrow peninsula at the Baltic Sea in Northern Germany.

Only the sky and sea can be seen, which the artist filmed for one month every day. The tide, day and night, the moonset; an infinitely repeating process becomes a play of light. *traveling time series* is an ongoing project, where images from different places and times, which the artist records and collects over the years, are interwoven.

The movement within and between the images is the central focus. The far becomes near, the presence dissolves in the flow of images.

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Born 1976 in Germany. Lives and works in Berlin, Germany

Japanese-German video artist, Masayo Kajimura has made short films, video installations and works in collaboration with dance and music. Her poetic and associative composition of moving images has been described as folding layers of different realities. Her work has been shown in numerous exhibitions and festivals throughout Europe, the US and Asia including Internationale Kurzfilmtagen Oberhausen, Amsterdam Film Experience and Paivascares #1. She has received several grants, e.g. from the women artists program of the City of Berlin, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), and the Zeit Foundation. She has been invited as an artist in residence several times, the latest in 2012 at MoKS in Estonia.



# THE CAR CRASHES

MASSIMILIAN & NINA BREEDER

The Car Crashes (Lincoln Limited, Hammer H2) / USA /

2010-13 / 19'09 / 4K DC / Colour / 16:9

Through a series of several self-contained but interrelated vignettes, *The Car Crashes* explores the notion of reproduction, extinction, speed and engine power. The concept of landscape evolves throughout each sequence as a human antagonist, a physical barrier that can only be penetrated by an act of violence.

Born 1978 and 1979 in Italy. Live and work in New York City, USA

Massimilian Breeder and Nina Breeder collaborate in a series of films and performances focused on duality as a larger and more complex individual, profoundly connected and obstructed by the landscape. Their collaboration began and continues as a form of assisted procreation, occurring in isolate and motionless dioramas. Their works have been presented in the Centre Pompidou in France, Pera Museum in Turkey, Pecci Museum in Italy, the Anthology Film Archives in New York and Darom Art Center in Israel.



# ELDORADO

ROMAIN KRONENBERG & BENJAMIN GRAINDORGE

Eldorado / Romain Kronenberg & Benjamin Graindorge / France /

2012-2013 / 18' / video / model and drawings / 16:9

On the one side there is an arid desert, the idea of a far virgin land, a space to conquer. On the other, an architect builds under the eye of the camera, a model made of pins and balsa wood evoking the topography of the desert and a designer draws lines that combine with the pictures of the desert. Model and drawings represent the common vanishing point of two creators who seek a distance for their own momentum.

Born 1975 in Paris, France. Live and works in Paris France

Romain Kronenberg started his work in 2004 through a series of musical and visual performances at Fondation Cartier and Palais de Tokyo (France). From now on, his work evolves around video and sound, in a hypnotic and contemplative style. The music he composes holds an essential place in his video work. Indeed, Romain was first a composer formed at Ircam (France) after studies of theology and music in Geneva.

In 2009, Romain was an artist in residency at Villa Kujoyama in Kyoto. Since then, he imagines movies in the perspectives offered by distant lands considered as spaces to conquer. In 2011, he travelled across Turkey from Istanbul to Diyarbakir with the actor Nathan Duval for the road movie *My Empire of Dirt* following Nathan's walk to a magnetic and imaginary vanishing point. In 2012, he directs *Eldorado*, a film shot in the Spanish desert joined by models and drawings from Benjamin Graindorge.

Website: [www.kronenberg.fr](http://www.kronenberg.fr)



# REMNANTS OF THE FUTURE

URIEL ORLOW

Remnants of the Future / Armenia-UK / 2010-12 / 18'17 / video / 1:2.55 (Cinemascope)

*Remnants of the Future* weaves together elements of documentary, sci-fi and the sound of dying stars. It explores the precarious existence in a post-Soviet ghost town, an inverted ruin of the modern that is still waiting to fulfill its utopian ambition of communal living. It is set in Northern Armenia in a vast, unfinished housing project named after Mush 2, the once flourishing Armenian town in Eastern Anatolia and built on the orders of Mikhail Gorbachev to house the people displaced by the 1988 Spitak earthquake. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 abruptly halted the building and the new city has since remained in a ghostly state of incompleteness, inhabited only by migrating birds and isolated human scavengers.

Born 1973 in Zurich, Switzerland. Lives and works in London, England

Uriel Orlow explores the spatial and pictorial conditions of history and memory, focusing on blind spots of representation and forms of haunting. Working across video, photography, drawing and sound Orlow brings different image-regimes and narrative modes into correspondence. Orlow's work was presented at Manifesta 9 (2012), the 54th Venice Biennale (2011) and 8th Mercosul Biennial in Brazil (2011). Recent solo exhibitions include *Uriel Orlow: Back to Back*, Spike Island, Bristol (2013), *Time is a Place* at Kunsthause/Centre PasquArt, Biel (2012), *The Short and the Long of it 9.0* at Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art, Toronto (2012) and *There is Nothing Left* at ACAF Alexandria, Egypt (2011). His work has also been included in numerous international group exhibitions, including *Ateliers de Rennes* (2012), *Anarchism without Adjectives* at Extra-City, Antwerp (2012), *Unseen Blows* at Seventeen Gallery, London (2012) and *The Gate of the Invisible Must be Visible* at Casa del Lago, Mexico City (2012). In 2012 Orlow received a Swiss Art Award at Art Basel.

Website: [www.urielorlow.net](http://www.urielorlow.net)